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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2008

In Today's Papers

Council of State Releases Statement Supporting Court of Appeals Declaration

All news outlets report the Council of State (Danistay) released a statement on Thursday to express its unease with the AKP government's harsh response to the Court of Appeals (Yargitay) declaration. The Council of State statement said the Court of Appeals declaration released Wednesday against the ruling AKP government was "not politically motivated." In addition, the statement noted, "Top judicial institutions in Turkey have the right to interfere in the process of constitutional and legal amendments regarding the judiciary. We see this as part of our constitutional responsibility to protect the basic principles of the Republic." The statement also criticized the government for not discussing its judicial reform strategy draft with the Turkish judiciary before submitting the document to the EU. The court called such a move, "out of line with the principles of independence."

Opposition far right MHP leader Devlet Bahceli said the Court of Appeals declaration was a "righteous reaction." He urged President Abdullah Gul to "take initiative to bring together the heads of legislation and judiciary to end the crisis among the basic institutions of the Republic."

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak writes, "The Council of State's announcement supports the Court of Appeals' attempts to influence the AKP's closure case in the Constitutional Court," and claims the statement was "Another act that damages the judiciary." Mainstream Hurriyet writes, "The exchange of harsh statements signals a new phase in the conflict between the AKP government and the judiciary, and is likely to stoke tensions further." Tabloid Aksam criticizes the statement, saying "The judiciary has violated the rule of not commenting on ongoing cases." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet sees it as "Big support" as "the Council of State, political parties and lawyers back the Court of Appeals declaration." In "The Judiciary's Memorandum Frenzy," leftist Taraf, lashes out at the "sister statement" released in support of the Court of Appeals declaration. Ahment Altan of Taraf calls the statement, "an indication of panic," in the judiciary and "those who embarrassed their own society with

coup attempts will be pushed outside of the system where they would never gain back the respect they have lost." Cengiz Candar of economic daily Referans wrote the statement, "harmed the public's understanding that the Court of Appeals is an independent and impartial institution." Taha Akyol of mainstream Milliyet wrote, "The independence of the judiciary should not be interpreted as judicial oligarchy." Erdal Safak of mainstream Sabah noted this incident proves judicial reform is "the most pressing issue." Ergun Babahan of Sabah calls the institutional disputes, "the pangs of a developing democracy." Ali Sirmen of Cumhuriyet calls the statements "a judicial coup attempt," and Hikmet Bila of the same paper notes, "The court should take sides in favor of the constitution." Ihsan Dagi of Islamist-oriented Zaman writes, "A group of supreme judges is trying to settle a score with the national will and with democracy."

Editorial Commentary on Government-Judiciary Conflict

"Counter Statement"

Ahmet Hakan writes in mainstream Hurriyet (5/23): "I ask the nation to evaluate yesterday's statement from the Court of Appeals (Yargitay). Should state institutions negotiate with each other to resolve their internal disputes? Or, should they issue public statements, one after another, to force the public into their disputes? What can the public do? Will they stop voting for the AKP and instead vote for Yargitay? In that case, what will the CHP's function be? Or, is it possible for the CHP to dissolve itself and join Yargitay? Anyway, let's put all these questions aside and try to be satisfied by complaining to the nation that these institutions are forcing us to ask such nonsense questions. I leave

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it to the great Turkish nation to recognize that Yargitay's recent statement could only be written by the main opposition party CHP. The insane Yargitay has begun a secularist Jihad against the religious government."

"Yargitay's Authority"

Melih Asik wrote in mainstream Milliyet (5/23): "Government Spokesman Cemil Cicek declared, 'Yargitay doesn't have authority to speak for the nation.' Why? Is there a rule that prohibits Yargitay from issuing statements? If there is true democracy in this country, then it is natural for the Court to warn the nation about threats to the judiciary. If universities, intellectuals, opposition parties and institutions protected the judiciary from the government's attacks, Yargitay would not feel the need to issue such a statement. The government's reaction to this statement was nothing but a bouquet of rage. The AKP government has engaged in "Operation Pressure," against the judiciary for months. AKP deputies have urged the European Council to intervene in Turkey's judiciary. The EU's third class officials have arrogantly talked down to the Turkish judiciary. In turn, everyone in Turkey has been pressuring the judiciary. Now, why are none of these activities declared anti-democratic? Is this what you call democracy?"

"Yargitay Statement"

Tamer Korkmaz commented in Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak (5/23): "The Yargitay statement proves the judiciary is politicized. This statement has no judicial or legal binding. Yargitay stated their initiative was in the name of the "status-quo," i.e. the shadow government. The Yargitay wanted to influence the Constitutional Court's decision regarding the AKP closure case. The latest efforts from Yargitay and Danistay should not confuse anyone. It is impossible for Turkey to go back to the days where the shadow government ruled the country; the status-quo shadow government has already lost its sovereignty in Turkey."

Babacan: Syria-Israel Peace Talks to Continue Periodically
Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports Foreign Minister Ali Babacan said Thursday peace talks between Syria and Israel would "continue periodically." Babacan described the indirect peace negotiations between Syria and Israel, held in Istanbul under Turkey's sponsorship, as "satisfactory" for the two sides. He told a joint press conference with the visiting foreign minister of Burkina Faso in Ankara a "common ground" had been reached and that this would allow the negotiations to continue. Mainstream Sabah quotes Babacan

as saying the basic philosophy of the meetings was "peace for land" or "land for peace." "The Israeli-Syrian leg of the Middle Eastern peace process officially resumed after 13 years and the talks will continue under Turkey's supervision," Babacan reportedly said.

Barzani Hopes Turkey-Iraq Official Talks to Continue

Milliyet, Sabah, Zaman and Cumhuriyet report Nechirvan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq, said they would not allow terror organizations to use the Iraqi territory for operations against Turkey. Barzani, who is visiting Washington, told a group of Turkish journalists at the U.S. Congress he hoped talks with Turkish officials held in Baghdad on May 1 would continue. He stressed they would continue their measures against the PKK. "Turkey's demand that Iraqi territory not to be used against Turkey is a righteous one," said Barzani.

Meanwhile, leftist Taraf, nationalist-oriented Cumhuriyet and liberal Radikal report, "KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani attended a reception in Washington hosted by the U.S.-Kurdish Friendship Group in the U.S. Congress." The newly formed caucus is co-chaired by Tennessee Democrat Lincoln Davis and South Carolina Republican Joe Wilson. Barzani highlighted that the group's establishment was "an important event." Liberal Radikal points out the reason for the U.S.-Kurdish Friendship, that the Kurds are "the U.S.'s most loyal allies in Iraq."

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Turkey Joins Joint Strike Fighter Production

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Turkish Parliament has adopted Thursday a bill on approval of an international agreement regarding Turkey's participation in production of Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) warplanes. The law foresees that Turkey would become a partner of a most important defense project worth USD 250 billion. JSFs will replace F-4 and F-16 fighter jets which are to conclude their technical lifespan by 2010.

HRW Report: Turkey's Gays, Lesbians Have No Rights, No Law
Leftist Taraf cites excerpts from the New York-based Human Rights Watch report on the widespread violence used against gays, lesbians, and transvestites in Turkey. The 100-page report, titled "We Need a Law for Our Liberation," points to the biased and prejudiced attitude by police, military, judiciary, and health workers against marginalized groups in Turkey. It calls on international health organizations and the European Union to put pressure on Turkey, stressing, "Turkish laws are insufficient in protecting homosexuals, and the existing legislation cannot be enforced due to discrimination and prejudice." The report was written after four weeks of field research in each of the cities of Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir in 2003, and in Ankara, Istanbul, and Van in 2007.

TV Highlights NTV

Domestic News

- The Greek military general staff chief General Dimitrios Grapsas is scheduled to pay an official visit to Turkey from May 25-28 at the invitation of his Turkish counterpart, General Yasar Buyukanit.

- The Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) criticized in a statement the advertisement on the Kurdish question placed by the Kurdish Institute in Paris in Le Monde and International Herald Tribune. The MFA statement said the ad "was putting forth conditions to end the activities of the terrorist PKK."

- Health Minister Recep Akdag said contaminated water resources caused the diarrhea epidemic in the central Anatolian province of Aksaray. At least 8,500 people were hospitalized on complaints of diarrhea in Aksaray and the nearby province of Konya over the past week.

International News

- Syrian Information Minister Muhsin Bilal told al-Jazeera

Television on Thursday they had received guarantees from Israel via Turkey for a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

- Former Kurdish lawmaker Leyla Zana said in a speech addressing the British parliament the PKK's struggle was an "insurance policy for the Kurdish people."

- General David Petraeus said the U.S. should counter Iran's rising influence by increasing diplomatic and economic pressure on Tehran, while retaining possible military action as a "last resort."

WILSON